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Country: Vietnam

Subject: Attitudes of French and Vietnamese, Saigon
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Place Acquired:

Date Acquired:

Date of Info: Jan-May 53

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1. met many of the local French business community in Saigon, both in a business way and socially, and discussed prospects in Indochina with them. The large business houses, as for example Denis Freres, have no intention of pulling out of the country. They believe that they will be able to operate successfully even under a purely Vietnamese government. This view is not shared by small French businessmen. The latter are mainly occupied in trying to get their money out of the country. Small business firms are constantly changing hands from one French colonial to another, each hoping to improve his financial position sufficiently to get out. The average French colonial is definitely defeatist in his outlook.

2. A fair amount of building is in progress in Saigon but the owners are attempting to amortize their investments within a two year period. This makes rentals extremely high and some non-French firms such as Socony-Vacuum and Shell Oil are putting up their own buildings rather than pay the exorbitant rents.

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3. met a fair number of Vietnamese in a business way and found them genuinely pro-US and anxious to do business with the US. did not discuss local politics with the Vietnamese.

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4. met few Chinese. From French and Vietnam sources was told that the Chinese, who operate all the big gambling establishments, pay protection money to the Vietminh to prevent raids on their establishments. Neither French nor Vietnamese regarded the Chinese as pro-Communist, rather as neutralists ready to accept any government.

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- 25X1X 5. Police personnel in Saigon are Vietnamese, except for a few top French officers. French residents treat the Vietnamese traffic police with utter contempt, and even Vietnamese residents do not appear to have much respect for them. There are two Surete offices, one French and one Vietnamese and passport visas must be obtained from both. The usual practice is to go first to the French Surete. ■ did not hear of any case in which the Vietnamese Surete refused a visa after the French Surete had granted one, and ■ would not care to speculate on what would happen if the Vietnamese Surete granted a visa after the French refused one. 25X1X

- 25X1X 6. ■ heard various opinions on the Caodaiist movement. One French rumor attributed a recent bomb outrage to the Caodaiists. On the other hand many foreigners visit the Caodaiist temple some 20 odd miles from Saigon and are well received. The average French resident regards the Caodaiists with suspicion.

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